

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 EUR-12 AF-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-12 AID-05
OMB-01 TRSE-00 HA-05 /110 W
-----045570 140000Z /15

O 132343Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0830
INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY

S E C R E T MEXICO 09783

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: XA, CU, UR, MPOL
SUBJECT: MEXICAN REACTION TO SOVIET AND CUBAN ROLE IN
AFRICA

REF: A) STATE 148740 B) MEXICO 4602

1. EVENTS IN AFRICA, INCLUDING SOVIET AND CUBAN MILITARY PRESENCE ON THE CONTINENT, ARE PERIPHERAL TO MEXICO'S BASIC FOREIGN POLICY INTERESTS. THUS IN ANY DEBATE OR DISCUSSION OF THE ISSUE THE GOM WOULD LIKELY REFER TO THEIR TRADITIONAL POLICY OF "NON-INTERVENTION" AND TAKE A PASSIVE ROLE.
2. DURING SECRETARY VANCE'S VISIT TO MEXICO IN EARLY MAY, SECRETARY OF FOREIGN RELATIONS ROEL ATTRIBUTED CUBAN PRESENCE IN AFRICA TO THEIR "BLOOD TRIBUTE TO THE RUSSIANS". ROEL ALSO NOTED THAT CUBAN PRESENCE IN AFRICA PROVIDED A TEST FOR THE COMBAT READINESS OF THE CUBAN ARMY. HE SAID MEXICO HAD NOTHING TO FEAR FROM CUBA, BECAUSE MEXICO HAD ITS OWN SUCCESSFUL REVOLUTION. BASED ON HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH CASTRO, ROEL APPARENTLY BELIEVES

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US POLICY AND ATTITUDE PUSHED CUBANS INTO HANDS OF SOVIETS AND THAT U. S. SHOULD LIFT THE BLOCKADE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS. HE DISCOUNTS THE VIEW THAT CUBAN PRESENCE IN AFRICA FULLFILLSCASTRO'S GOAL OF MAKING CUBA A THIRD WORLD LEADER. BECAUSE ROEL VIEWS CUBAN PRESENCE IN AFRICA TO BE PRIMARILY A RESPONSE TO SOVIET REQUEST, HE BELIEVES THEIR PRESENCE WOULD DECREASE WITH A CHANGE IN U. S.

POLICY THAT LESSENS CUBAN DEPENDENCE ON SOVIETS, I. E.,
LIFTING THE BLOCKADE.

3. IT WAS THE U. S. HOPE THAT LOPEZ PORTILLO WOULD DISCUSS
THE QUESTION WITH THE SOVIETS DURING HIS MID-MAY VISIT TO
THE SOVIET UNION. HOWEVER, IT APPEARS THAT HE CHOSE NOT
TO RAISE A CONTENTIOUS ISSUE WITH HIS SOVIET HOSTS,
POSSIBLY FOR FEAR OF FEOPARDIZING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF GOALS
MORE VITAL TO MEXICO, I. E., SOVIET SIGNATURE OF THE
TLATELOLCO TREATY.

4. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT GOM BELIEVES SOVIET AND
CUBAN ROLE IN AFRICA TO BE A POTENTIALLY DIVISIVE ISSUE
AMONG LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES. IF THE ISSUE WERE TO BE
RAISED IN MULTILATERAL FORUM, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT MEXICO
WOULD PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE, AND MIGHT VERY WELL ABSTAIN ON
A VOTE CONDEMNING SOVIET/CUBAN INTERVENTION IN AFRICA.
LUCY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978MEXICO09783
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780247-0549
Format: TEL
From: MEXICO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780666/aaaaceiu.tel
Line Count: 80
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: a159498a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 148740, 78 MEXICO 4602
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2374910
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MEXICAN REACTION TO SOVIET AND CUBAN ROLE IN AFRICA
TAGS: MPOL, PINT, PEPR, XA, CU, UR, US, MX
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a159498a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014